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Various Verses

of

VINTON A.
HOLBROOK

VARIOUS
VERSES

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Vinton A.
Holbrook
" "

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INTRODUCTION

Grateful for whatever merit these verses contain, regretting their mediocrity, and aspiring to efforts more worthy of the name of poetry, I have published them with the hope that some of the kind people whom I am privileged to call "friends," and perhaps a few others, may read them, and find therein some word or line that will please, cheer, and perhaps ennable.

VINTON A. HOLBROOK.

"THE SHERMAN,"
15th and L Streets,
Washington, D. C.

JANUARY 24, 1914.

As the Sands of the Sea

Silently I watch the motion,
Of the vast, the surging ocean,
Where the waves go tumbling far as eye can reach,
In their ceaseless, wild endeavor,
They roll on and on forever,
And eternity's the lesson that they teach.

Thoughtfully I sift in leisure
The bright sand, the gleaming treasure,
That provides an endless path along the shore,
And I think how life would lengthen,
All its aims and motives strengthen
If the hour-glass of life contained this store.

If each tiny grain of whiteness,
In its purity and brightness,
That is lying 'neath the waters of the sea,
Through this hour-glass descended,
Ere our span of life were ended,
It would almost touch the far eternity.

On they roll, the waves, forever,
And there's nothing that can sever
Us from Life eternal, and all that it implies,
Each good deed, each kind emotion,
Sends its ripple o'er life's ocean,
And the wave it sets in motion never dies.

December 18, 1913.

A Knight of Today

I assure you there's no joking,
When I say it's most provoking,
Coming home to your apartment house,
A block or so in height,
When the colored boy politely,
Comes and tells you most contritely,
That he's "Sorry but the elevator
Will not run tonight."

First you glare at him quite madly,
Then, resigned, you start up sadly,
To the bachelor apartment,
Far above awaiting you.
So you're fuming and you're fussing,
'Neath your breath you do some cussing,
And you wearily plod upward,
For there's nothing else to do.

Just ahead you see a maiden,
And you note that she is laden
With a satchel and a half a
Dozen bundles more or less,
Then you say to her demurely,
"May I help?" She answers "Surely,"
For we're always glad to aid a
Pretty lady in distress.

Now you find her ways so winning,
That from this unique beginning,
There develops soon a romance,
And ere long you are made one.
So you now go up together,
Every night, all kinds of weather,
And you bless the elevator
For the time it did not run.

January, 1910.

The Honey Bee

There are ways about the honey bee 'tis well for us to know,
For it extracts all the sweetness, and then lets the other go.
It alights upon the roses and the fragrant clover tops
And when it gets all the sweetness out it resolutely stops.
When it buzzes off each morning hunting for its breakfast food
It is not content with poison but is after something good.
When it comes upon the bitter root, or carrion or decay,
It tarries not an instant, but proceeds upon its way.
If it gathered all the bitter, to augment its honeycomb,
We would never care to purchase it to sweeten up our home.
We can find a lot of bitter without hunting the world through,
But if we are looking for it, we can find the sweetness too.
We can find a deal of badness in each face upon the street,
But there's beauty if we search for it in every one we meet.
So I think there is a lesson in this tale for you and me,
If we want to store up gladness, we must imitate the bee.

“Roll On”

“Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll,”
Thus spoke the famous poet to the sea,
As if he feared it would not reach its goal,
As if the waves might halt in mutiny.

Thus do we speak unto the elements,
As if we had a voice in their control,
And were empowered with some higher sense,
To make the mighty waters cease to roll.

I wonder what the ocean old would say,
If by some means, it ever learned the knack,
Of speaking, would it say, “Oh, please go 'way,
And let me sleep,” if it could answer back?

“Mother”

At some function* she attended,
Someone near to where she stood,
Said of mother, “What a splendid
Type of American motherhood!”

Well we know the words thus spoken,
By the stranger there were true,
Mother, dear, I give this token,
Of my loyalty to you.

For you minified our sorrows,
And you soothed away our pain,
Telling us of glad tomorrows,
When our *sun* would shine again.

Yes, you are a splendid mother,
Beautiful unto our eyes,
For your thoughtfulness of others,
And your sweet self-sacrifice.

For your loyalty to duty,
To your home and children’s care.
For in doing good there’s beauty,
And I breathe a fervent prayer,

That we children in our labors,
May as faithful be and true
To our homes, our friends and neighbors,
Dear good Mother, as were you.

*New Year’s reception at White House, Jan. 1, 1910.

January, 1914.

Back to Boyhood's Haunts

*Written when my father and I visited his old home in Vermont
in 1910.*

I saw him as he looked upon, once more,
The home, that had been his so long ago,
Where once he played upon the wooden floor,
With life, its joys and sorrows yet to know.

A half a century had wrought its trace
Upon his form, and sprinkled him with gray,
Since, barefoot boy, he romped about the place
In childish glee, when all the world seemed gay.

Again he hears the babble of the brook,
And down the pathway steep he makes his way,
Where once he used to go with fishing hook,
On glorious mornings in the month of May.

And as he ponders on this dear old scene,
He hardly feels that half a century
Has vanished since he sported on the green,
So vividly portrayed in memory.

But time has nestled gently on his brow,
Because his years were filled with kindly deeds,
With face pressed forward, living here and now,
With loving thoughtfulness of others' needs.

I will not wait till he's become a spirit,
Then scatter roses o'er his lonely mound,
I'll say it to him now while he can hear it,
That he may now with gratitude be crowned.

By the Sea

We were sitting by the seashore;
As I watched her tiny hand,
I was eager for the message,
She was writing on the sand.

She was queen to me, this maiden,
She was bonny, good, and fair,
With a dignity unyielding,
Yet a sweet and gracious air.

I had asked the time-worn question,
That is old, yet ever new,
And had made that same old promise,
That I always would be true.

And I thought in trepidation,
Of the suitors by the score,
Waiting eagerly to shower
Her with wealth and fame galore.

Since the golden days of childhood,
We had listened side by side,
To the beating of the waters,
And the flowing of the tide.

And I felt if she would listen,
To the counsel of her heart,
She would give the happy answer,
And we never more would part.

Far away the sun was sinking,
And the light was growing less,
When I saw her trembling fingers
Trace the letters y-e-s.

Then a mist came from the ocean,
With the passing of the sun,
And in its haze, to beholders,
We, perhaps, appeared as one.

But she was not sentimental,
Even by the moonlit sea,
For the maids are very practical,
In the twentieth century.

When I told her of my prospects,
That I had not made my pile,
“Don’t you think,” she whispered sweetly,
“We had better wait awhile?”

December, 1913.

Childhood's Ways

We love the dainty little face,
With eyes of honest blue,
Where falsehood never found a place;
Each word and look is true.

We wonder why when youth has flown,
No longer do we find
That pure attraction, now unknown,
With childhood left behind.

But if again our hearts are filled
With honesty and truth,
Such as we had when still a child,
We'll find our long lost youth.

December, 1910.

The Winter Sunbeams

Struggling through the frosty air,
Come the Winter sunbeams fair,
And they gaze in grave dismay,
At the snowbanks, as they lay
Frigid, cold, and oh, so deep,
Like some monster thing asleep;
But before the day is done,
Frightened, they are on the run,
And, within a few short days,
Hand in hand these beaming rays,
Strive with will, and snowbanks flee,
Foaming, dashing to the sea.

Try It

You are of the élite,
And you pass down the street,
In your hauteur and grandeur and pride;
When you see a sweet maid
Whose old garments are frayed,
And you "pass by on the other side."

You had known her in days,
When your own quiet ways,
Were as simple and humble as hers,
But they now call you "great,"
Through the workings of fate,
And you're costumed in velvets and furs.

You did not hear her sigh,
As you passed quickly by,
Nor take note of the tears, quick to start;
Of the look in her face,
As she felt the disgrace,
Nor the sick'ning pain in her heart.

Now, suppose, Miss Élite,
That you try being sweet
To your old friend, not haughty and cold,
And I think your surprise
At the joy in her eyes,
Will compensate you a hundredfold.

Yes, I think you will find,
That it pays to be kind;
Surely that is the way that God planned.
For perhaps after 'while
You will long for a smile,
And the pressure of some friendly hand.

January 19th, 1914.

To a Friend

Mary, Mary, you're a brick;
You came down when I was sick,
Came and read to me quite often,
And it seemed to sort of soften
Up the feelings growing hard,
Where the soul had sort of barred
Out the tho'ts of Truth and Love
Radiating from above;
So you let the sunshine in,
Helped to banish thoughts of sin.
You came with no thought of gain,
Wishing just to soften pain,
With a manner sweet and gentle,
With no feelings sentimental,
With no thought of base rewards,
But to touch the hidden chords
In the heart and soul of me,
To a sweeter melody.
Not to pity or condole,
But to waken up the soul
From its lethargy and sleep;
Pointed out the pathway steep,
That led on and up to where
I might see the vision rare,
In the higher atmosphere,
Far above the valley drear.

Thank you, Mary, you and all,
Of the friends who came to call,
And to cheer me for a while,
With a kindly word and smile;
I would take your hands in mine,
And would let you know how fine
That I feel it was of you.
That is all that I can do.
Lest, perchance, that I, too, may,
As I pass along life's way,
Enter at the lonely door,
Of some heart grown sad and sore,
And with happy smile and song,
Pass the joy and cheer along,
Tenderly and lovingly,
Just as you have done to me.

The Poetry of Life

There's poetry in life when every word
Is clean and pure and redolent with love,
As liquid note dropped from the sweet-voiced bird,
As crystal flake tossed from the heaven above.

There's poetry in action that is moved
By hidden fire as quenchless as the sun,
Deeds that by tend'rest conscience are approved,
That help the needy and do ill to none.

There's poetry in deeds that are impelled
By motives noble, lofty, and apart
From sordid aims, where selfishness is quelled,
To lift the burden from another's heart.

The man who throws himself into the deep,
Swift current, that a brother may be saved,
Has, for his proud posterity to keep,
A poem on the hearts of men engraved.

When trait'rous friends with villainy appall,
When every hand is tight and clenched with greed,
If one is sweet and true amidst it all,
In such a life there's poetry indeed.

The eye that seeth beauty everywhere,
In lofty mountain and in foaming sea,
Discerns therein the poem wondrous fair,
Indited by our God for you and me.

Indian Summer Luncheons

I'm thinking of some quite exquisite lunches
That were eaten on some bright October days,
As we sat upon the banks of the Potomac,
And across its waters watched the sunset's rays.

There were two of us you know, that ate together
These dainty bits of good things she prepared.
We went in balmy, cool, or stormy weather,
And all in all 'twas mighty well we fared.

We often lingered by the quiet river
That delicately rippled 'neath our feet,
Until those jewels rare from the great Giver,
Blazed out above, from their far-off retreat.

A choo-choo car provided locomotion.
We went to the most isolated spots.
And sometimes this machine would take a notion
When we wanted it to go—that it would not.

There is no sadness in this retrospection,
For the manna of our God is ever nigh,
For Truth supplies each need of one's affection
There is no want for which one needs to sigh.

And so if we no more shall go a-riding
In the little choo-choo car—my Ford machine,
We're traveling heav'nward if we are abiding
In Truth and Love,—Myself and Catharine.

November, 1911.

The True Affection

Some lives give us high inspirations,
While some, with a word we pass;
Some lights shine to far generations,
While others sink low, alas!

The one of which I am dreaming,
Seems a beautiful one to me,
But I must beware of the seeming,
And only the genuine see.

While a good and a noble woman,
May look beautiful to my eyes,
Personality is of the human,
Imbedded in dust, ne'er to rise.

Then let's love if we will her spirit,
Not her face, or her hands, or hair,
Let us look for the God-like merit,
Which is pure, and fadeless, and fair.

November, 1911.

An Automobile Courting

If you're courting a girl in an automobile,
An experience that is unique;
As you glide o'er the road with your hand at the wheel,
With the moonlight about you, what romance you feel,
And you may think of something that you'd like to steal,
As you glance at her sweet, rosy cheek.

The road that's beneath you is splendid, in part,
And the engine is working just right;
But you're uncertain yet of the road to her heart,
She has furnished no compass or outline or chart,
And you do not know just where to aim cupid's dart,
And you're working and hoping for light.

Sometimes when you speed on a fine looking pike,
You suddenly come to a bump;
And so with this maiden demure that you like,
You think that with her you have made a ten-strike,
But all of a sudden she tells you to hike,
And you realize that you've been a chump.

November, 1911.

Ambition

What purpose great should make us rise at morn,
With strength and courage in our heart and hand?
What aim and object should our lives adorn,
To make us men such as the Father planned?

We've listened to the wisdom of the seer,
These words have reached us from the young and old,
That lust for gain should not blight one's career,
With its mad chase for power and for gold.

And yet one should not rest in stupid ease,
Let apathy and indolence have sway,
And leave an open door to sin, disease,
The while our strength and talent steal away.

For with each day there comes a duty grand,
To clean and purge our lives of aught of sin,
To scatter seeds of joy throughout the land,
To make the roses grow where weeds have been.

No matter if the flesh in anger shrieks,
"The prize of life lies in another way."
Take not the road the carnal nature seeks,
It only leads to discord and decay.

Each morning when its rays come bright and fair,
The earth of all its darkness sad to cure,
Into our hearts should come a humble prayer,
To make our lives as beautiful and pure.

The great and only goal which satisfies,
The only crowning, true, and real success,
Each yearning of our heart and soul supplies,
Is that of seeking God and righteousness.

And then at last, when twilight hovers near,
"Though bruised and bleeding from the battles fought,
Vanish'd the turmoil, gone the haunting fear,
We'll find the prize is grander than we thought.

The Moon and Night

When gloomy night has settled all about,
When all the noises of the day are still,
The veil-like clouds withdraw, the Moon comes out,
And laves with silver flood each vale and hill,

There's something in the quiet of the night,
To gaze on tiny world so far away,
There's something in the streams of heavenly light,
That seems to smooth away the cares of day.

Ah, what a time and place to meditate!
We gaze into the vast ethereal sea;
Upon the distant orbs we ruminate,
Of what they are and how they came to be.

We wonder then how many thousand eyes,
Of poor and rich, of people everywhere,
Are fondly gazing up into the skies,
To view this Queen of Night so wondrous fair.

On some dark mountain where the savage sleeps,
Untutored and untaught in aught of books,
Where prowling tiger round him stealthy, creeps,
From his far cave on this same Moon he looks.

The polar hunter urging on his dogs,
The red man chanting his unearthly tune,
The lumber jack a-sawing up the logs,
Are kissed by sister beams from this same Moon.

Our thought then wanders to the long ago,
And ponders of the sights that she has seen,
In war, the night attack upon the foe,
And all the deeds of valor, and the mean.

In every age she watched the cooing pair,
Until she hid her face to save a blush,
Abashed, she could not on the lovers stare,
While rapturous kisses broke the midnight hush.

We wonder, if ten thousand years or so
From now, she'll look down on the same old sights,
And youths and maids will then be here below,
Like us, a-peering at the heaven's lights.

As, long you gaze into the inky space,
With worlds unnumbered winking down at you,
You're filled with awe, and all the low and base
In thought is 'banded for the pure and true.

We feel somewhat the littleness of "I,"
The pride of self is from our nature torn,
The wondrous power of our God on high;
And holier, purer thoughts are in us born.

A New Year's Prayer

O Lord above, whose eye can pierce the years,
Dost know their holdings well, of joy or tears,
Help me before tomorrow's light streams in,
To dredge from out my soul all filth and sin.

Help me to see the beam in my own eye,
A brother's mote not straining to descry,
Not thanking Thee that good's monopolized
By me, the while a publican's despised.

Help me that every day in this new year,
My tongue may carry tidings of good cheer,
That every hour may be used for Thee,
And bear rich fruitage of divinity.

Let me be kind and just in all my ways,
Let me count precious each of these new days,
Receptacles from God in which to place,
Man's highest gifts to Him, duty and grace.

Help me to hope when darkness fills the sky,
Fill me with faith when everything's awry,
Teach me to love when enemies oppress,
Help me from failure sore, to snatch success.

So when another newborn year awaits
Our greeting, and this passes out the gates,
While knowing well the journey's just begun,
I'll hope perhaps to hear the words, "well done."

A Trolley Episode

It is not so very pleasing
To be on a street-car squeezing
Through the jam, and trying very hard to reach the distant door,
When you feel the keen sensation,
Of a hat pin's penetration
In your head. Of course you bravely smile altho' it makes you
sore.

In your ribs are elbows sticking,
And you find it hard in picking.
Out a solitary vacant place in which to put your feet;
By your side a babe is crying,
And you realize time is flying,
While you find it rather difficult to keep your manners sweet.

Leaps the car in sudden motion,
And you straightway take a notion,
Quite unconsciously, to sit down in a pretty maiden's lap.
Now your face gets red with blushes,
And the girl in anger flushes,
While quite audibly she wonders, "What's the matter with the
chap."

So a street car is annoying,
And I'm thinking of employing
An imported chauffeur with a limousine of latest style.
While it may seem rather funny,
Still I have not got the money,
So I fancy I will have to use the street-car yet a while.

A Dream of Boyhood

To my midnight dream,
Came a precious gleam,
 From the days of the long ago;
And I sat once more,
By the old barn door,
 And I watched the sunset's glow.

With the horses fed,
And to pasture led,
 And the tasks of the day all done,
I would muse of the things,
That one's manhood brings,
 With my thoughts of the years to come.

Through the gentle haze,
Of the future days,
 Came a picture of wealth and fame;
With my plate piled high,
All that gold could buy,
 To my lap in abundance came.

And how sweet the thought,
That this picture brought,
 Of the place in that home-to-be;
Where my parents dear,
Could be ever near,
 And their faces in joy I'd see.

At the midnight stroke,
Of some clock, I 'woke,
 To return from the far away,
But it scarcely seemed,
That this thing I'd dreamed,
 As then on the couch I lay.

So I realized then,
That things had not been,
 Through the years as I hoped they'd be;
For of wealth and fame,
I had dreamed in vain,
 Like a host of humanity.

But with conscience clear,
Free of guilt or fear,
 And a kindness done now and then;
Quick to duty's call,
Though my part be small,
 I'll not dream of what "might have been."

Does it matter much,
If I can not clutch,
 All the prizes that glitter bright;
If the heart beats true,
And the deeds I do,
 Will not shrink from the clear white light?

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